

VZCZCXRO5021
RR RUEHIK RUEHPOD RUEHYG
DE RUEHNT #0364 0861254
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 261254Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9429
INFO RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 3842
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 0056
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 4458
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0336
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2407
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RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS TASHKENT 000364

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRAISES UZBEKISTAN FOR
ABOLISHING DEATH PENALTY

¶1. (U) Summary: On March 26 the government-run press published a letter from an Amnesty International official praising Uzbekistan's recent steps to formally abolish capital punishment. The article noted Uzbekistan's actions were consistent with the requests specified in a 2007 United Nations resolution. Uzbekistan does indeed deserve praise for this major step forward, but there is still much work to be done to improve the human rights situation. End summary.

¶2. (U) On March 26 the newspaper *QNarodnoe SlovoQ* (People's Word), an official publication of the Uzbek parliament and Cabinet of Ministers, printed an article provided by the Information Agency *QJahonQ* of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) entitled *QThe Principled Position of Uzbekistan Is Highly Valued by Amnesty InternationalQ*. The article notes that MFA recently received a letter from Amnesty International's Director of International Law and Organizations Martin McPherson. The letter expresses the organization's gratitude to the Government of Uzbekistan for implementing the resolution *QMoratorium on use of the death penaltyQ* (Resolution 62/149), which the article says was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 18, 2007.

¶3. (U) The letter also noted that 87 member-states from all geographical regions co-authored the resolution in the Third Committee of the United Nations. In December 2007 at the plenary meeting, 104 states voted to support a resolution calling on all states still allowing capital punishment *Qto place a moratorium on implementing the death penalty and subsequently abolish it*.

¶4. (U) McPherson wrote that Amnesty International was convinced that adoption of such a resolution by the main body of the United Nations was an important milestone in the eventual worldwide abolition of the death penalty. By February 28, 2008, 135 nations of the world had abolished the death penalty in both law and in practice. McPherson believes this resolution is an important instrument with which to encourage other nations still using the death penalty to reconsider their laws in accordance with an emerging international standard, to decrease the number of crimes for which the death penalty can be used, and to promote discussion in national institutions and among civil society groups about placing a moratorium on the death penalty.

¶5. (U) At the end of the letter McPherson expressed Amnesty International's hope to continue to work with the

Government of Uzbekistan to achieve the worldwide moratorium on implementation of the death penalties as a step to its complete abolition.

Comment:

16. (U) The Government of Uzbekistan craves international praise for its progress in this dimension of human rights and is justifiably pleased by recognition from a high-profile organization such as Amnesty International. Uzbekistan deserves commendation for formally abolishing capital punishment, given the risks in how it was applied here, but it still has a long way to go to join the mainstream on protection of human rights.

NORLAND